

# Sacrifice, bitterness and a call for honor

## Former S.J. resident nominated for the nation's highest medal

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After he saved his Army reconnaissance unit by blowing up enemy machine-gunners in Vietnam, after he waded into a wall of napalm-fueled fire to pull another soldier to safety, David Christian returned home to have his valor questioned.

In 1972, a dean of admissions at Rutgers-Camden doubted the authenticity of his war wounds, Christian said Friday during an interview at the Adelpia Restaurant in Deptford.

In front of other students, the dean asked Christian to remove his shirt and poked his bullet-hole scars with the eraser tip of a pencil.

Times are different today.

The current law school dean, Ruyman Solomon, said Rutgers goes out of its way to treat student-soldiers and returning veterans with respect.

Christian's wounds were real, proved by 33 surgeries, seven Purple Hearts, two Silver Stars and a Distinguished Service Cross medal.

But there is one medal missing for Christian.

He doesn't have the Medal of Honor — the country's highest recognition of service.

Last month, during a reunion in Florida of his men — who called them-

selves Christian's Butchers — two Florida congressmen agreed to nominate Christian for the award to the Pentagon.

On Friday, U.S. Rep. Rob Andrews, D-Haddon Heights, also agreed to ask the Pentagon to give

Christian the highest honor.

According to his nomination for the medal, Christian's unit was pinned down by North Vietnamese fire on Oct. 29, 1969.

He single-handedly charged a machine gun nest, lobbed a hand grenade and then dropped to the ground as the earth shook beneath him. But that wasn't the end of the battle. And it's not the only reason Christian, now 55, is being nominated.

After he blew up the machine gun nest, 30 North Vietnamese arrived as reinforcements. Four hours of fighting ensued.

Finally, out of ammunition, fighting on "guts and adrenaline," Christian picked up the only weapon he had — his bayonet — and screaming rebel yells, took on the enemy alone, according to his Medal of Honor nomination.

"Christian's face was streaked with blood and his fatigue jacket was soaked with blood," the nomination says. Al-



Medal of Honor



One of the most decorated combat soldiers to have served in Vietnam, David Christian (above) wears a ring commemorating his service in the Army. Christian (left) is comforted by friend Ken Gewertz at Adelpia Restaurant in Deptford as he recounts painful memories of how he was treated in the 1970s at the Rutgers-Camden School of Law.

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